

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0406

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 1706

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, PO

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PORTUGUESE AMBASSADOR TO UNITED
NATIONS

1. FOLLOWING PORTUGUESE PERMREP VEIGA-SIMAO'S RETURN FROM LISBON CONSULTATIONS, HE HAD LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH AMBAS-
SADOR BENNETT MAY 21. VEIGA-SIMAO CAME BACK DECIDEDLY GLOOMY
OVER PROSPECTS FOR PORTUGAL. HE STRESSED WITH CONVICTION
THE SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION AND
EMPHASIZED WHAT HE REGARDS AS DANGEROUS GROWTH OF COMMUNIST
INFLUENCE AND POWER, EITHER THROUGH ACQUIESCENCE OF CONNIVANCE
OF RULING MILITARY AUTHORITIES. IN FACT, HE EXPRESSED VIEW
THAT MATTERS HAVE GONE SO FAR NOW THAT THE PRESERVATION
OF FREE SOCIETY IN PORTUGAL AND HOLDING COUNTRY EVEN
TO SOCIALIST COURSE WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH VIOLENT
CONFRONTATION.

2. HE WAS SHATTERED BY GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO CLOSE
REPUBLICA FOLLOWING COMMUNIST MOB ATTACK AND DENOUNCED TREAT-
MENT OF RAUL REGO IN VIEW LATTER'S LONG RECORD AS ANTI-FACIST.
VEIGA-SIMAO DEPLORED CRESCENDO OF ATTACKS ON MARIO
SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF HIM AND OTHER SOCIALISTS AT MAY
DAY RALLY AND SUBSEQUENTLY.

3. VEIGA-SIMAO SAID HE HAD GONE ABOUT HIS BUSINESS IN
LISBON QUIETLY AND HAD NOT SUFFERED ANY PERSONAL ATTACKS FROM
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COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED PRESS OR OTHERWISE. HE HAD MET SEPARATELY

WITH PRESIDENT GOMES AND FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES. HE HAD GOT LITTLE OUT OF COSTA GOMES WHOM VEIGA-SIMAO DESCRIBED AS A MAN WHO DOESN'T REVEAL HIMSELF. LATER ON IN CONVERSATION HE WAS SOMEWHAT SCORNFUL OF COSTA GOMES AND ASSERTED LATTER IS BUSY ACCOMMODATING HIMSELF TO WISHES OF RADICAL OFFICERS IN ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND WILL CONTINUE DOING SO UNTIL THEY FIRE HIM. VEIGA-SIMAO CONSIDERS MELO ANTUNES A MODERATE AND SAID LATTER HAD ADMITTED CANDIDLY TO HIM THAT HT DID NOT KNOW WHERE THINGS WERE GOING OR WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT.

4. PORTUGUESE PERMREP DID NOT SEE PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES, WHO HE LABELS AN OUT-AND-OUT COMMUNIST, IN GOOD PART A "MYSTIC" WHOSE IDEALISTIC IMPULSES AND DETERMINATION TO CHANGE PORTUGAL HAVE NOT SO MELEDE WITH COMMUNIST DOGMA THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHERE ONE SIDE OF HIS MIND ENDS AND WHERE THE OTHER SIDE BEGINS. HE ALLEGED THAT PRIME MINISTER IS HEAVY DRUG USER; IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHAT KIND OF DRUGS HE MEANT. HE COMMENTED THAT GONCALVES TAKES DRUGS TO KEEP HIMSELF AWAKE AND THEN TAKES DRUGS TO HELP HIM SLEEP AND AS RESULT IS BECOMING PHYSICAL AND NERVOUS WRECK. HE SAID HIS STATEMENTS WERE BASED ON INFORMATION FROM MEDICAL DOCTORS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN TREATMENT OF PRIME MINISTER, AND HE WAS CONVINCED HIS INFORMATION WAS ACCURATE.

5. VEIGA-SIMAO EXPRESSED REGRET OVER RRECENT MOB ATTACK ON U.S. EMBASSY AND DEPLORED PHYSICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST TWO U.S. MARINES. HE COMMENTED SADLY THIS KIND OF INCIDENT IS ALL TOO TYPICAL IN LISBON TODAY AND IS INDICATIVE OF DETERIORATION IN LIFE THERE, WITH "COMMUNISITS AND MAOISTS" CREATING CONSTANT DISRUPTIONS AND DISTURBANCES AND WITH OFFICIAL DECISIONS ALWAYS BENDING IN THEIR DIRECTION. HE HAD VISITED COIMBRA AND FOUND THE UNIVERSITY A SHAMBLES, RADICAL STUDENTS TERRORIZING THE FACULTY, CLASSES NOT BEING HELD, ETC. IN LISBON AND ELSEWHERE POPULAR COURTS AND BLOCK VIGILANTE COMMITTEES IN EASTERN EUROPEAN FASHION ARE NOW BEING ORGANIZED. AGAIN AND AGAIN HE CAME BACK TO SHOCK OF THE REPUBLICA INCIDENT.

6. HE SAID CLIMATE IN CIRCLES OF HIS ACQUANINTANCE NOW FRANKLY ONE OF FEAR. HE BELIEVES IT TOO LATE NOW TO GET CONFIDENTIAL

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THINGS BACK ON EVEN A SOCIALIST COURSE WITHOUT VIOLENCE. IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE MODERATES ARE NOT IN MAJORITY IN OFFICER CORPS, BUT STEP BY STEP EVERY DECISION SEEMS TO FOLLOW WISHES OF MILITANT RADICALS. IN ADDITION, THERE IS REAL QUESTION NOW WHETHER ENLISTED MEN WOULD FOLLOW COMMANDS OF OFFICERS IF THEY WERE PUT TO THE TEST. MANY OFFICERS, AS WELL AS CIVILIANS, HAVE LEFT PORTUGAL FOR BRAZIL AND ELSEWHERE; HE PUT NUMBER AT FORTH THOUSAND,

THE MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE SKILLED PEOPLE. HE XPRESSED HOPE EMIGRATING OFFICERS WERE ORGANIZING THEMSELVES ON THE OUTSIDE. IN ANOTHER COMMENT, HE RECALLED PORTUGUESE HISTORY AND REMINDED THAT CHANGES IN LISBON HAD ONCE BEFORE BEEN EFFECTED FROM MOVEMENT BASED IN AZORES.

7. VEIGA-SIMAO URGED THAT U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENTS CONTINUE TO BE ACTIVE IN PORTUGAL AND MOUNT A PROGRAM THERE WHICH WOULD GIVE HOPE AND HEART TO MODERATES. HE WAS VAGUE, HOWEVER, WHEN QUERIED ON WHAT DEFINITE SUGGESTIONS FOR A PROGRAM HE WOULD HAVE. HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS VERY LATE NOW; IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE HELPFUL EARLIER AND MIGHT HAVE ARRESTED RADICAL TREND IN THE FIRST POST-REVOLUTION MONTHS.

8. VEIGA-SIMAO SAID FOR HIM THE QUESTION HAS COME DOWN TO ONE OF SIMPLE MORALITY. HE CANNOT IN CONSCIENCE SERVE A GOVERNMENT LIKE THE PRESENT ONE. HE PLANS TO STAY ON AT UNITED NATIONS UNTIL JUNE AND DEPART AFTER ACCOMPANYING COMMITTEE OF 24 TO LISBON FOR ITS SCHEDULED VISIT JUNE 12-19. HE SAID PRIME MINISTER HAD SENT WORD HE WOULD LIKE HIM TO BECOME HEAD OF AN APOLITICAL TECHNICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BUT HE DOES NOT PLAN TO ACCEPT. IN EVENT HE DID TAKE ON SUCH A JOB, IT WOULD ONLY BE A QUESTION OF TIME UNTIL HE WERE FORCED OUT. HE CONTINUES ACTIVELY CANVASSING JOB OPPORTUNITIES HERE.

9. COMMENT: MOST OF ABOVE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ALREADY BE KNOWN TO EMBASSY. CONVERSATION IS REPORTED, HOWEVER, IN HOPES THERE MAY BE SOME ITEMS OF NEW INFORMATION.
BENNETT

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